

Scanning the Data Environment at the University of Massachusetts Medical School
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Objective: “Environmental scanning constitutes a primary mode of organizational learning” (Choo 1999). In a step toward active development of research data support services for its community, the Lamar Soutter Library at the University of Massachusetts Medical School has undertaken extensive environmental scanning to better understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of an academic biomedical institution with respect to research data. Given the variety of potential data services that an academic library may deploy, the information gathered from these activities will identify and prioritize new library activities.

Method: Environmental scanning activities include a survey of student’s experiences and attitudes with research data management; faculty and administrator interviews (via the DuraSpace 2014 eScience Institute program); and the identification of existing local services and policy documents related to research data. Results from these activities are analyzed by the Library Data Services Advisory Group and the eScience Institute working group to plot a formal roadmap for library-based data services.

Results: Students, faculty, administrators, and existing documentation together reveal a variety of attitudes, assumptions, and avenues for the handling of research data on campus. They identify potential activities where the library might play a role, some expected and some unexpected.

Conclusion: Information gathered during environmental scanning activities at the University of Massachusetts Medical School informs the development and prioritization of library-based research data support services.